I Claim:

1. Apparatus for use in distributing a plurality of articles of different kinds throughout a facility that has a central storage area, and a plurality of user areas distributed in the facility at substantial distances from the storage area, comprising,

a storage cart in the storage area having a plurality of storage bins for holding a corresponding number of said articles of different kinds,

the storage cart having labels individually identifying articles in the storage bins,

an open supply cart adjacent to each of the user areas and having supply bins for receiving said articles,

supplemental means applicable to the supply cart and having control buttons respectively corresponding to and identifying said articles,

means responsive to said control buttons for visually recording identification of the articles placed in and removed from the supply cart.

2. Apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein,

the control buttons are manually actuatable and closely adjacent respective ones of the articles when the supplemental means are in operating position on the supply cart.

3. Apparatus according to Claim 2 wherein,

a user is enabled to actuate a control button in the same motion of the hand used in placing said articles in the supply cart and removing them therefrom.

4. Apparatus according to Claim 2 wherein,

the supply cart has a plurality of shelves on which the bins are formed, and which are operable for receiving and supporting the articles, and

wherein the supplemental means is in the form of panels,

the panels are capable of being detachably mounted on respective ones of the shelves in position accessible to a user,

each panel has said control buttons thereon respectively corresponding to said articles on the corresponding shelf.

5. Apparatus according to Claim 4 wherein,

each panel includes signal lights corresponding with the push buttons for visually indicating the presence of articles on, and absence of articles from, the shelf.

6. Apparatus for use in distributing a plurality of articles of different kinds throughout a facility that has a central storage area, and a plurality of user areas distributed in the facility at substantial distances from the storage area, comprising

a storage cart in the storage area having a plurality of storage bins for holding a corresponding number of said articles of different kinds,

the storage cart having labels individually identifying articles in the storage bins,

an open supply cart adjacent to each of the user areas and having supply bins for receiving and holding said articles, and the supply cart having labels individually identifying articles in the supply bins,

supplemental panels having push buttons operably associated with the storage bins, and the apparatus including a computer for registering signals from the push buttons.

7. Apparatus according to Claim 6 and including,

a computer operable associated with each supply cart, and operable in response to actuation of the push buttons in the respective supplemental panel for recording the withdrawing of articles from the supply cart.

8. Apparatus according to Claim 7 wherein,

the computer is capable of receiving signals from the respective cart identifying the cart and registering the number of the articles in each bin in the cart.

9. Apparatus according to Claim 8 and including a plurality of supply carts of identical construction,

the computer is capable of receiving signals from each of the supply carts and functioning in relation to all of the supply carts as set out in Claim 8.

10. Apparatus according to Claim 9 wherein,

the apparatus includes a system computer, and a server computer, and

the cart computer is capable of transmitting signals to the server computer.

11. Apparatus according to Claim 10 and including a printer, and the server computer is operable for transmitting signals to the recording means.

12. Apparatus according to Claim 6 wherein, the capacity of the supply bins may be less than that of the storage bins,

the computer means is operable for sensing the number of articles in the supply bins and in the storage bins and, in response to the number in the supply

bins being less than that in the storage bins, being capable of setting up a control signal,

the apparatus also including a recording means,

the computer means being capable of transmitting said control signal to the printer, and the printer, in response to receiving said control signal, being capable of printing a pick list containing the difference between the number of articles in the supply cart and the number in the storage cart.

13. A method for distributing a plurality of articles of different kinds, comprising the steps,

providing a storage area and a storage cart in the storage area,

the storage cart having a plurality of bins for supporting and identifying said articles,

providing a plurality of receiver areas at substantial distances from the storage areas and the receiver areas being adapted to be occupied by receivers capable of receiving said articles,

providing a plurality of supply carts at distributed locations, the supply carts having bins respectively identical with the bins in the storage cart and having indicia identifying said articles put therein,

the supply carts being open and thereby enabling any person to withdraw articles therefrom and transport them to the receiver area,

providing supplemental panels having manually actuated means for registering articles placed in and withdrawn from the bins,

manually actuating the registering means, and

utilizing the computer means to register the difference in numbers of articles in the storage cart and the supply cart.

14. A method according to Claim 13, an including the steps, maintaining the supply cart in open condition indefinitely, withdrawing articles continuously throughout a predetermined overall period, independently of operation of other steps, and restocking articles from the storage cart to the supply cart, independently of operation of other steps.

15. A method according to Claim 14 and including the steps of providing a single such storage cart, and a plurality of such supply carts at locations at substantial distances from the storage cart and from each other, and

utilizing each supply cart independently from each other for transmitting said signals to the storage cart.

16. A method according to Claim 13 and,

providing a security camera and utilizing it for operably photographing the supply cart throughout said predetermined period of operation of the supply cart.

17. Apparatus according to Claim 7 and including means for providing alert signal in response to the presence of hazardous materials in the articles.

18. Apparatus according to Claim 7 and including,

means for identifying an empty bin in the supply carts, made empty by a previous user.

19. Apparatus according to Claim 7 and including,

signal means in each bin of the supply carts activatable by the user to identify the receiver of the articles withdrawn.

END OF CLAIMS